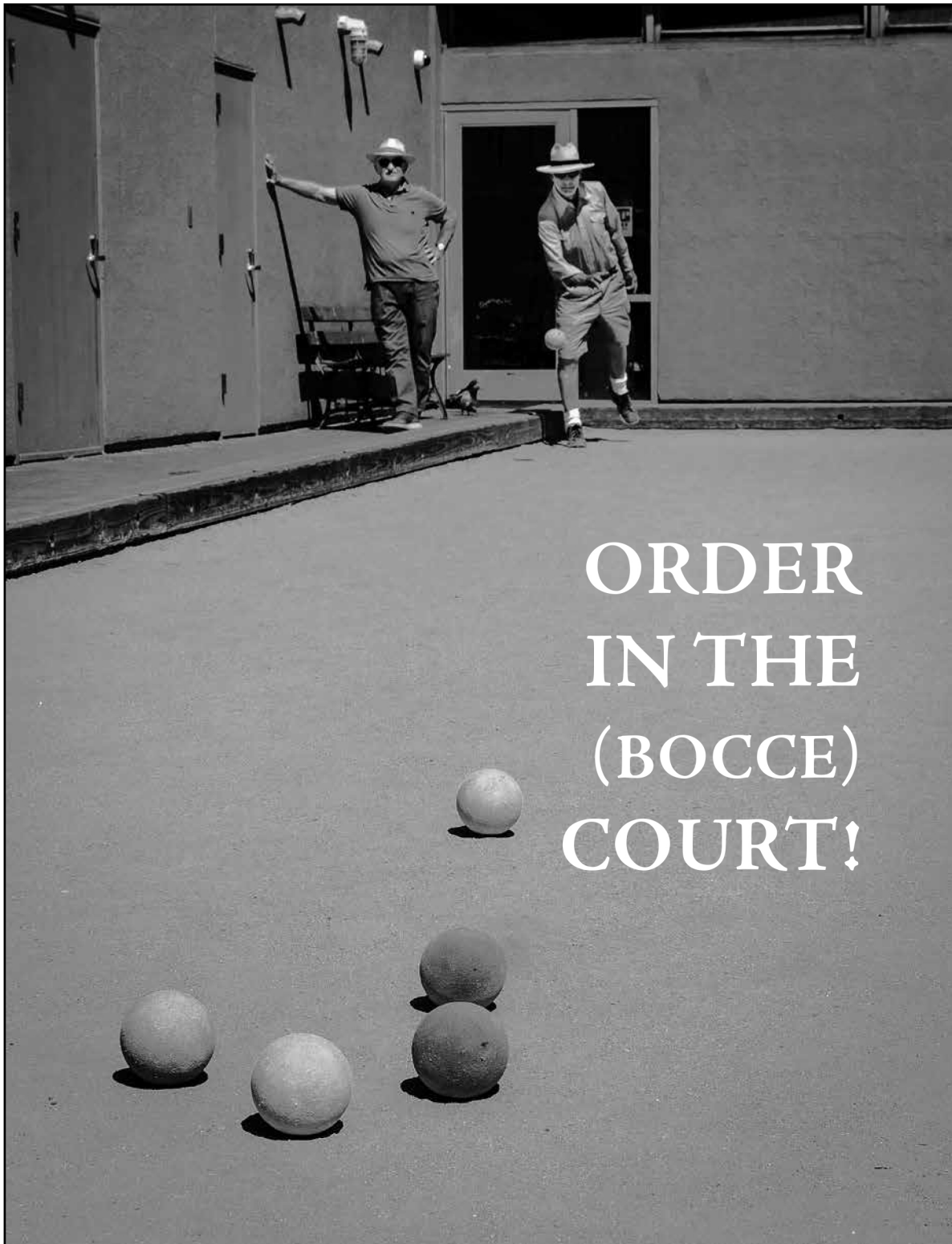


The Semaphore

A Publication of the TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Issue 239

Fall 2022



ORDER
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COURT!

KIDS CORNER

by Sarah Kliban
kids@thd.org

Welcome to Kids Corner! THD wants to hear from kids in the neighborhood! If you'd like to ask a question, or you're a kid and want to be interviewed, please contact us at kids@thd.org.



ANTHONY HAYDEN, 9

What is the household chore you hate the most?

“Cleaning my room. Boring. Sorting my clothes! I have to clean all the things up off of the floor.”

What’s your best Halloween costume ever?

“Steve from Minecraft in 2020. It felt very cubic. It was fun. I felt like actual Steve from Minecraft. The Noob looks like him except The Noob is droid.”

What kind of food would you be willing to take a bath in?

“How about ‘What drink?!!!’? I’d rather take a bath in a milkshake. A chocolate milkshake. Because I could taste the delicious brown chocolate!”

If you had the superpower to fly, where would you go?

“I would fly all the way from San Francisco, California to Centralia, Illinois. It’s cool. There are even railroads there. Canadian National.”

What is your favorite place in North Beach?

“Joe DiMaggio Park. It has an actual swing set and a big slide and a fish thingy.”

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ANNALIA JADALLAH, 7

What is the household chore you hate the most?

“It used to be putting away the dishes, but now it actually might be garbage. I’m usually doing something, and my parents are like ‘You have to help me take out the garbage!’ It’s very rude.”

What’s your best Halloween costume ever?

“The merwitch—half mermaid, half witch. I really liked the Golden Princess. But this year, I’m going to be a vampiress. There’s a make up kit and fake nails.”

What kind of food would you be willing to take a bath in?

“Pasta. Angel hair. Butter. Lemon. My least favorite would be broccoli!”

If you had the superpower to fly, where would you go?

“To Sweden with my friends. Because I wouldn’t have to go through a lot of planes and a boat. To Gotland.”

What is your favorite place in North Beach?

“901 Columbus Cafe. I like their milkshake with the strawberry and banana.”



AIDEN LO, 9

What is the household chore you hate the most?

“Cleaning my bed. Because every time I do the corners, I keep messing up the blankets. It’s hard to do.”

What’s your best Halloween costume ever?

“It was a knight. It had a sword, and I had a helmet. It was really cold. There was like cold stuff in it. It was hot outside, and that felt nice. I couldn’t see anything though. I went into a store, and they gave me a Lego set. I wanted another one, so I went out and put my helmet on and came back and I got another one!”

What kind of food would you be willing to take a bath in?

“Char Siu. It’s really good. Every time I eat it, I eat like two bowls of it.”

If you had the superpower to fly, where would you go?

“Hawaii. I could swim. It’s really hot there, not cold like here. I would go for the weekend.”

What is your favorite place in North Beach?

“Francisco Park. Because there are swings and a lot of other stuff.”



ELEANORE HAYDEN, 11

What is the household chore you hate the most?

“Cleaning my room. Because mainly my mom bugs me about it a lot. It’s my room and I should be able to make that decision. The worst is having to smell my clothes to see if they’re dirty or clean!”

What’s your best Halloween costume ever?

“My top three favorites were a killer doll, a vampire, and the witch. The vampire was cool and had a cape and blood pellets, which dripped down your mouth. The doll had a knife. The broom for the witch was cool.”

What kind of food would you be willing to take a bath in?

“Jello. Red jello. Not sure why. I just think it would be fun.”

If you had the superpower to fly, where would you go?

“Hawaii. The ocean is beautiful. I wouldn’t have to pay for plane tickets. It would be a lot faster than a plane. I could fly over the erupting volcanoes and look from above and take photos.”

What is your favorite place in North Beach?

“Victoria Pastry. They have delicious cookies and cake. The Black & White Cake.”



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Al Fontes
President@thd.org

Thirty years ago, when I took my first real look at North Beach, I felt like I was in Disneyland. It reminded me of “Main Street USA,” an area designed by Disney architects to invoke America at the turn of the 20th century. The similarity is no surprise, as much of our neighborhood was constructed in the early 1900s, after the 1906 earthquake.

Adopting a Victorian motif, Disney’s architects designed Main Street to create the intimate, down-home feeling of a quaint midwestern town. Similarly, our neighborhood has a distinct small-town feel despite being part of a large, densely-populated city.

Our streets are narrow and pedestrian-focused. The central area is punctuated at one end by the Transamerica Pyramid and at the other end by Washington Square Park, itself framed by Sts. Peter and Paul Church. Correspondingly, Disney’s Main Street has a train station at one end and a castle at the other. The respective geographies of the two places incorporate town squares, public gathering spaces, and human-scale architecture. In both cases, diagonal streets create unusual intersections — points of interest often becoming a locus of human activity.

But the differences are much more significant than the similarities. Far from being “Disneyesque,” North Beach is real. People live and work here, and, thankfully, we have not become an Airbnb village.

We can pick up some groceries when we need to, or go get a hammer and a box of nails. We can have our dry cleaning done or buy a book. We have real streets and no pedestrian malls. We embrace public transit, and we like to walk while living our everyday lives. It’s a place where you can have a normal, 21st-century life.

The result: Our streets and sidewalks are teeming with locals living shoulder-to-shoulder with visitors.

At my favorite cafes, restaurants, and stores, I often see people whom I recognize. Having lived on Vallejo Street for 23 years, I find it nearly impossible to walk past Caffè Trieste on my way home without running into someone I know.

I also see plenty of visitors, and there’s something about this place that encourages everyone to share this space. I never get the sense that hordes of tourists are driving me away from my favorite places. Nor does it seem like they’re uncomfortable sharing the beauty of our entire neighborhood. I find myself very grateful to have a place where this mixture of folks, from here and around the world, seems to enjoy each other’s company.

Maintaining the authenticity of our neighborhood is a key goal for THD. Yes, we love our bars and restaurants, but if it gets to the point where that’s all we have, then, indeed, we will have little more than a theme park.

We need to preserve the architectural integrity of the built environment. To foster a functional, livable community, we must work within a framework that neither romanticizes the past nor holds it in contempt. We should reject the technocratic, consumerist lie that something new is always superior to something old. As we are stewards of a place that is beautiful, thriving, and humanistic, the fact that much of it was built a century ago need not motivate us to change it drastically. Despite being of an historic time both aesthetically and stylistically, North Beach feels modern, and life here is contemporary. There’s nothing fake or phony about it.

When SFFD drives its huge hook-and-ladder around the neighborhood, one steering wheel in front and one in back, with bells clanging, this invokes a feeling of old times, populated by firefighters who have traditionally been considered legendary, even heroic. But

they aren’t driving that truck around just to show it off; they are making sure they can drive that beast down the street and turn a corner, because they know it’s a matter of time before they have to put out a fire. Hence the beauty of something real: the shiny red truck, the solid brass bell rung by hand, the words “San Francisco Aerial Truck Co.” in bright, gold lettering on the door. It all harkens to the past, yet remains necessary and unquestionably relevant to modern life.

Is the charm and character of an historic neighborhood like ours sustainable? Of course it is. But it will forever require vigilance, lest the forces of greed and avarice turn it into another tourist trap. Certainly, preserving and enforcing the formula retail ban is a centerpiece of that effort. As the Shared Spaces program (a.k.a. “parklets”) enters its next phase, we need to make sure that it is implemented in such a manner as to help all businesses, including stores that need natural light and street-wide visibility to thrive. We must continue to embrace existing limits on the number of bars and restaurants and promote locally-serving businesses.

For our home to be livable, the City of San Francisco needs to do a better job of supporting our community. It needs to stop neglecting our trees. The streets and sidewalks need to be clean, and people need to be able to walk down the sidewalk without becoming random victims of abusive and/or violent behavior. We need transit systems that work, not massive construction projects that squander money on leaky tunnels.

When I have met potential new members at events such as the North Beach Festival, I have always said that change is inevitable, and we welcome it. However, embracing change does not mean that we must give in to the impulse to ruin what works, or to turn an authentic, living, breathing, functioning community into a product.



Advertise in The Semaphore. See page 11.

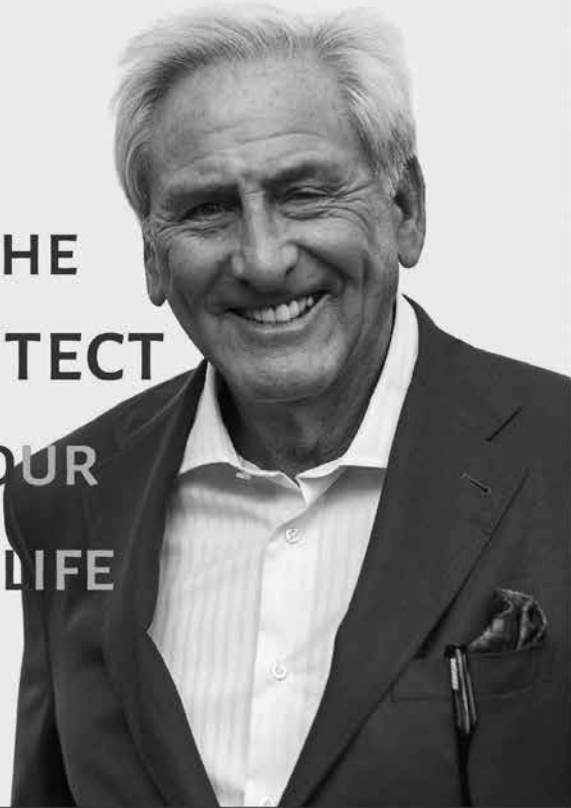
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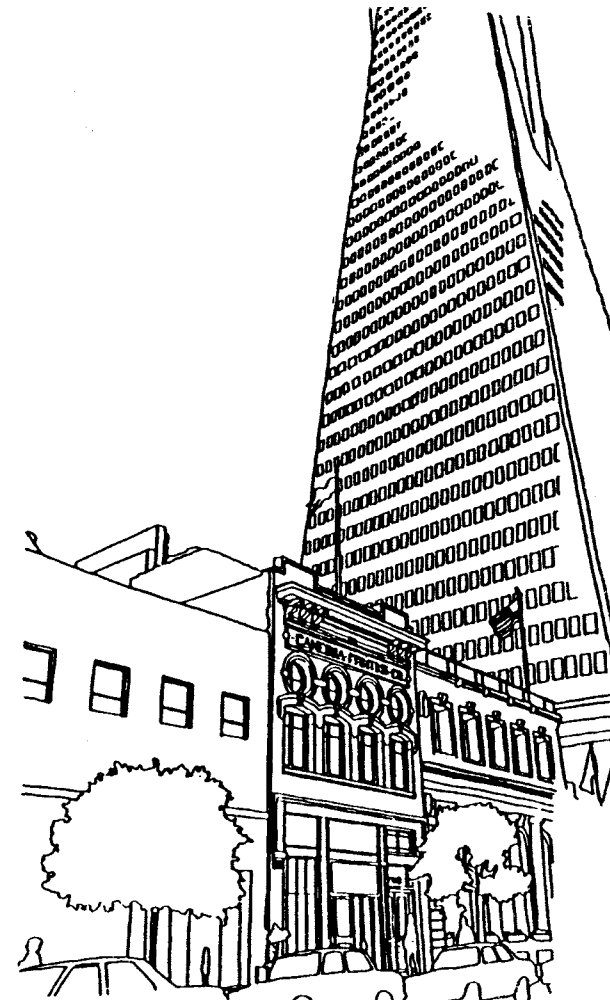
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PARKS & TREES REPORT

by Mike Rothmann, Committee Chair, and Lance Carnes
mike.rothmann@thd.org

When street tree control was granted to the Department of Public Works (DPW) in 2017, the agency was expected to expand and properly manage the urban canopy. San Francisco has a dismal 13.8% urban canopy cover, half the national average of 27%. What we’ve seen is a department that is not only unreliable and underfunded but is not using the resources it does have to achieve its forestry goals.

Why has DPW come up short? For one, funding is inadequate—there are no stable funding sources to achieve its mission. The Bureau of Urban Forestry (BUF), a subdivision of DPW, has laid out a plan to increase the number of street trees, but it is not attaining that goal either. Why? There isn’t enough money in the budget to plant and water new trees and to maintain existing street trees. Despite Proposition K, the municipal bond passed to fund care and maintenance of city trees, there is only 10% of the necessary monies to carry out that work over the next ten years. The planting budget largely relies on grant money and public charity indirectly through its nonprofit partners.

Funding aside, no one seems even to be updating the map that was made for the StreetTree SF program, which catalogs the state of the city’s street trees.

We put in a records request to DPW. The result? An emailed copy of the piece of paper used by the city employee who drives the truck around the city and waters the trees, shown below. This watering route lists the number of trees to be watered on a street but does not show a Tree ID or street number for that tree.

With no redundancies (in case that individual loses the map or forgets a tree) or Tree ID or street number, it’s quite possible that when new trees are planted and need to be watered, they can be overlooked and die, a loss of resources that BUF can’t afford to waste.

WEDNESDAY	
Drumm St. Memorial Tree	1 (M)
Washington St	5 (S)
Sansome St	2 (S)
Embarcadero	2 (S)
Broadway	2 (S)
Vallejo St. @ Columbus	1 (S)
Union St.	1 (S)
Columbus Ave. (600-700 Block)	8 (S)
Stockton St.	1 (S)
Grant Ave. (Part 1)	1 (S)
Francisco St.	4 (S)
Chestnut St.	6 (S) On Hold
Mason St.	13 (S)
Bay St	2 (S)
North Point St	7 (S)
Columbus Ave. (1100 Block)	5 (S)
Grant St. (Part 2)	1 (S)
Lombard St. (700-800 Block)	5 (S)
801 Greenwich St	1 (S) @ Columbus St/Mason St
Powell St.	1 (S)
Drumm St. to Powell St.	64 Total Trees

The watering list used by DPW (BUF) watering crews. (FROM DPW RECORDS REQUEST)



ART & CULTURE REPORT

By Nanci Gaglio, Committee Chair
nanci.gaglio@thd.org

Hello, everyone. I’m thrilled to serve as your new A&C Chair. I have a lot of ideas and will start with a few. And I’m eager to hear yours as well!

We have it all on Telegraph Hill and in North Beach: food, music, theater, clubs, salty sweet ocean air, great coffee, a famous literary history. And film.

Film? While no cinema exists in our neighborhood, it’s about time we begin to share the works of so many filmmakers who call North Beach/Telegraph Hill home. Starting on First Fridays in November, we’re planning to have an outdoor cinema screening of short films that represent our culture, both past and present. The plan is to project a loop of short films against a building space (location TBD) on each First Friday. No seats, per se. Just a loop of films in which those passing by could take interest.

ARE OUR TREES BEING WATERED?



Newly planted and now dead tree in front of Francisco Middle School and a damaged tree at 623 Green Street.

© MICHAEL ROTHMANN



We asked a crew member how he knew which trees to water with such a rudimentary list. He said that he knew where to go simply because he had done the route before and could remember all the trees that needed to be watered.

Even if this one driver is doing a conscientious job, it should not come down to one person to keep all newly planted trees alive on a particular route. There is no safeguard in place to ensure that the routes are completed weekly.

The evidence—the dead trees such as this young Victorian Box, now gone after being planted not six months ago during a DPW District 3 “Love Our City” workday. (In fairness, one can’t be certain why this particular tree died. A level of natural tree mortality is inevitable. But the level of losses we’ve seen in our neighborhood is clearly due to neglect.)

A “thinking outside the box” mentality might be necessary to grow San Francisco’s canopy. The shortfalls in funding are blatant, and partnerships with nonprofits and grantors, although promising, will be ineffectual without an organized city agency. The

potential weaknesses in the infrastructure of BUF must be scrutinized.

The staffing issues and problems with underwatered, overlooked saplings could be solved with a greater focus on information technology. Imagine a tree map integrated into the watering trucks so our lone BUF worker could follow his or her phone like an Uber driver. New trees get planted and labeled and are marked as watered when the truck comes close to it. The driver follows a pre-mapped route—no more missed trees.

GRACE MARCHANT GARDENS UNDERGOING UTILITY UPGRADES

The historic and beautiful Grace Marchant Gardens are currently undergoing a retrofit of gas pipelines. PG&E is planning to retrofit 140 feet of existing steel pipeline. Although the repair is relatively non-invasive (a plastic pipe snaking through most of the existing pipeline), intermittent sections will need to be excavated. So, there is still a threat of disturbance to this neighborhood treasure. The Gardens, originally established in 1949 and cared for by neighbors since the death of Grace Marchant in 1982, contain many old growth rose bushes and greenery planted by Grace herself.

PG&E has sent out a team, including arborists, biologists, engineers, and others, to conduct the work. Despite being well-intentioned and certainly experienced in what they do, the teams bring the risk of damaging the historic and delicate Gardens. It is difficult to watch the workers tromp through the carefully maintained beds as they stake out the existing pipeline. Work likely won’t start until November when most of the plants are hibernating; it will be important to keep an eye on the Gardens, so they don’t sustain too much injury during the process.



PG&E crew in the Grace Marchant Garden.

© MICHAEL ROTHMANN

NORTH BEACH CINEMA? YES!

Are you a filmmaker? Do you have old home movies that need a dusting off that we could run against a wall for passersby to see?

As it’s a new idea, we expect it will grow into something on its own. There’s a lot out there to discover and to screen. We’re planning a 60-minute loop with each film between one and 10 minutes in length. Black & White, old scenes of San Francisco, home movies, simple shots of old SF or North Beach, or just incredibly weird and wild stuff.

This is a call for entries. Do you have films to share? Please use my email, nanci.gaglio@thd.org, to send suggestions or descriptions of films you think we should consider. Let me know each film’s current format. And I’ll be in touch with you.

Also, we seek volunteers to help make this project happen. Please reach out if you have a few hours a month to spare. We seek curators, screeners, and those who simply love the movies and want to be a part.

As I was thinking about art and culture here in

North Beach, it feels ripe for more performance as well. A sample from the current opera? Storytelling by world renowned storytellers? Dance? Perhaps we can curate a performance of some sort at a particular time during First Fridays.

And finally, since we all love pizza (well, most of us)—and so many of us always talk about “who makes the best pizza?”—how about a pizza competition among the wonderful pizzerias in our neighborhood? This will take some time to think through and plan but could be like the Noodle Fest and a lot of fun.

Film. Dance. Pizza. So much to think about... I’m forming an Art & Culture Committee to consider all these ideas and more—to plan for and make them happen.

Once we get started, we’ll meet monthly (on Zoom right now) and divvy up tasks, so no one is burdened.

A quick email to say you’re on board is all I need. I’m also up to talking over a cuppa coffee or a glass of wine. Thank you, and I’ll see you out there.





DISTRICT 3 SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

by Supervisor Aaron Peskin
aaron.peskin@sfgov.org

Here is a sampling (albeit not a complete and in-depth list) of my recommendations for the November 8, 2022 election, informed particularly by my work on the Board of Supervisors as the Rules Chair when many of these measures were considered. Please go to <https://sfelections.sfgov.org/> for more information on ballot measures and candidates, as well as information on where and how to vote.

Prop 1: Codify Abortion Rights in California: YES!

Here in San Francisco, we've been working to mitigate the fallout from the Supreme Court's oppressive rollback of abortion rights long enshrined by *Roe v. Wade*. The State is also laying the groundwork to welcome women from across the country in need of safe and affordable reproductive services, as more states limit access. Prop 1 takes the extra step to codify abortion rights in our state constitution and makes it clear: California is a pro-choice and pro-woman state!

Prop 28: Allocating 1% of CA General Fund for Arts & Music Education in K-12 Public Schools: Yes

Supported by the California Teachers Association, this additional investment in California public education has been a long time coming.

Prop 30: Tax the Richest for Climate Change: Yes!

California is overdue to take bold steps to address crippling climate change. This tax would apply to Californians making more than \$2 million per year, with revenue going to fund electric vehicle infrastructure, EV consumer rebates, and wildfire prevention. Don't be dissuaded by the fact that Lyft is bankrolling Prop 30 to help it meet state-mandated transition to electric vehicles. It's good, solid policy that is a significant step in the right direction. Mega-millionaires have the biggest carbon footprints, and it's absolutely reasonable to recapture a fraction of that wealth to mitigate the problems they are exacerbating.

Prop A: Protect Pension Benefits with Retiree Supplemental COLA: Yes

(COLA = Cost of Living Adjustment)

Prop B: Department of Public Works Oversight Done Right: YES!

I have passed more good government measures than any other Supervisor and remain committed to maximizing government efficiency by cutting waste, while maintaining transparency, oversight, and accountability. I authored this measure with input from our City Controller and City Administrator to improve oversight of Department of Public Works' functions, without costly, duplicative, and unnecessary bureaucracy. I'm proud to have the universal support of a super-majority of the Board of Supervisors, the Mayor, and the SF Democratic Party.

Prop C: Establish an Oversight Commission over Department of Homelessness & Supportive Housing and Require Controller Audits: Yes

The Board of Supervisors resuscitated this reasonable measure to provide more transparency and accountability for a department responsible for addressing a serious homelessness crisis with a \$675 million budget.

Prop D: Duplicitous & Devastating Billionaire Housing Measure: NO, NO!

Don't be deceived: Prop D is yet another attempt by billionaire special interests—which paid \$1 million to gather signatures!—to completely restructure eligibility requirements for the City's affordable housing program by prioritizing individuals making \$135,800 a year to the detriment of low-income individuals, including families and seniors. The proposition doesn't

ANOTHER NOVEMBER ELECTION BRINGS CLEAR OPPORTUNITIES TO WIN CHANGE

build one stick of housing nor create funding for the construction of housing. This poorly-written measure had no input from affordable housing developers nor city staff who administer the City's affordable housing program—yet it would lock these requirements into the City's Charter, effectively making it impossible to rectify or change it. It's terrible policy and will do nothing to address our affordability or housing crises but will almost certainly exacerbate our homeless crisis as competition for fewer and fewer affordable units prioritizes a select few over many.

Prop E: Effective & Affordable Educator & Family Housing Streamlining: YES!

Prop E builds on a measure I worked on with former Supervisor Sandra Lee Fewer in 2019 to incentivize the production of educator housing. We overwhelmingly won that ballot measure, and recently the Mayor celebrated the groundbreaking of the City's first educator housing site as a direct result of our Nov 2019 ballot measure. I am whole-heartedly supporting Prop E this year, which will further streamline approvals for educator housing as well as affordable housing with labor protections, such as prevailing wage. We put this on the ballot with support from affordable housing developers and building trade and teacher unions, and it enjoys the support of both the SF Democratic Party and SF Labor Council. The bottom line: Prop E will be effective because to make it easier to build *truly* affordable housing, we can't keep overbuilding luxury projects for wealthy single adults, while we continue to under-build for low-and- middle-income families and seniors. Prop E rewards developers with benefits for *actually* affordable homes, including two- and three- bedroom units, to ensure families can stay in San Francisco.

Both Charter Amendments, Propositions D & E, are direct counters to each other—so whichever gets the most votes is what will get written into our Charter. Vote NO on D! And YES on E!

Prop F: Library Preservation Fund: Yes

The Library Preservation Fund provides critical funding for our branch libraries (which many of us depended on even more during the pandemic as service hubs), including funding-planned renovations of Chinatown's historic library. This Charter Amendment would renew the Library Preservation Fund for 25 years and increase library hours.

Prop G: Student Success Fund for SFUSD: Yes

As a self-proclaimed fiscal conservative and someone who takes my oversight role of the City's budget very seriously, I have historically been opposed to set-asides. After seeing what our students, parents, and teachers went through during the pandemic, though, I am supporting Supervisor Ronen's Student Success Fund. This would direct \$60 million per year to SFUSD schools through a grants program, allowing each school to apply for as much as \$1 million per year to fund extra staff, partnerships, or programs to improve students' academic achievement and social-emotional well-being. Our kids deserve this, and we frankly have a long way to go to repair the damage done by the pandemic, which only exacerbated pre-existing inequities in our education system.

Prop H: City Elections in Even-Numbered Years: Yes

California voters have long asked for electoral reforms, including consolidated elections that statistically lead to more voter turnout. Currently, SF holds elections for citywide offices like Mayor, District Attorney, and City Attorney during odd-numbered years, while state and federal races happen on even-numbered years. If you think you have voter fatigue, trust that our Department of Elections is dealing with even more staffing burnout and cost escalations. This common-sense electoral reform syncs local elections with state and federal elections. The bottom

line is that consolidated elections improve voter turnout, which is good for our democracy.

Prop L: Renewal of Existing Half Cent Sales Tax to Fund Transit: Yes

This is not a new tax but a renewal of a reasonable existing half cent sales tax, which is a key sustained funding source for our transit operating system in San Francisco (including Muni and ferry service, paratransit, and traffic signalization). Prop L renews the current tax for another 30 years but does not increase it.

Prop M: Empty Homes Tax: YES!

While the State continues to push false claims that the private market can somehow solve our housing crisis by overproducing supply, the reality continues to be that we have an affordability crisis that is not being addressed by supply. In fact, a conservative estimate done by the City approximates at least 60,000 empty homes in San Francisco, many in our larger apartment buildings, including District 3. Without punishing small property owners, Prop M targets the large corporate landlords and investment firms that try to drive up prices by intentionally keeping units off the market. This measure applies only to buildings of three or more units and proposes that if large landlords leave these units vacant for at least half a year, these owners will be charged from \$2,500 to \$5,000 annually for each unit, depending on size. The amount doubles each year for as long as the speculator leaves the home vacant, to a max of \$20,000, with all proceeds going to fund affordable housing and rent subsidies. This is a carefully crafted measure that the City is ready to implement and enforce, should it pass.

Prop N: Golden Gate Parking Garage Equity Reform: Yes

No matter where you land on the JFK street closure issue in Golden Gate Park, we have heard from low-income families and disability advocates across the City, especially the southeast, that affordable parking is a must at the Golden Gate Concourse parking garage. Prop N allocates City funding to restructure the parking garage payment system to create a low-cost accessible parking system when an equitable JFK closure plan is finally drawn up.

Prop O: City College Parcel Tax: NO!

I have long been a champion of free City College as well as increased resources for students and faculty, but let's review recent history. In the past 20 years, we've approved nearly \$1.3 billion in bonds for the school's facilities and allocated money from the City's General Fund to implement tuition-free classes. In the past eight years, City College has had NINE chancellors, a never-ending series of budget nightmares, and has come very close to losing its accreditation. This is the THIRD parcel tax proposed by City College in the past ten years. The one we're currently paying doesn't even expire until 2032!! Prop O is not only premature and ill-considered, it levies an even higher tax, which the City Controller estimates will have administrative costs actually exceeding what is even allowed in the measure by \$6 million! It's just a mess on top of a mess. Time for City College to be accountable and put forward a plan that addresses the institution's problems without wasting taxpayer money!

I know that this is just a fraction of what's on the ballot, but I hope you find this roundup helpful. I look forward to seeing you in the neighborhood—and at the polls on Election Day!

Aaron





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HAS THE CLOCK RUN OUT ON STANDARD TIME?

by George Schumm

The time is about here. In a few days, we'll engage in the annual ritual of "falling back," the resetting of timepieces one hour earlier, marking the end of this year's Daylight Savings Time (DST). At present, every state except Hawaii and (most of) Arizona joins in, although with less than enthusiasm. Some 30 states have come out in favor of dumping standard time and making DST permanent, while a dozen or so are seriously thinking of doing away with DST altogether.

The basic idea behind DST is found in a proverb Ben Franklin popularized:

Early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

Variations on the adage are found in ancient Latin texts. The Romans already recognized as early as the second century CE there was something to be gained by syncing our waking lives with daylight. Of course, earlier, agrarian societies would well have understood this also, even if they didn't write it down.

It was Franklin, too, who first worked out the mechanics of DST. While Ambassador to France, he suggested tongue-in-cheek that Parisians could save on candle consumption by setting their clocks ahead one hour. Since most people get up after sunrise in the summer, the switch would make use of extra, early morning light and reduce by one hour the span between sunset and bedtime. The net effect is up to an hour of additional daylight when candles aren't needed.

Port Arthur in Ontario, Canada first ventured to try DST in 1908, though the idea didn't really gain traction for another decade.

DST was introduced in this country during WWI as an emergency measure to save on burning coal for lighting and heating. The effort was repealed after the first year due to complaints from farmers. With unavoidable morning chores dictated by the sun rather than the watch, switching to DST meant farmers now arrived at market an hour later than before, thereby losing out on sales of produce.

The idea was employed again during WWII and in the energy crisis of the 1970s, once more as a fuel conservation measure. In the aftermath of the war, numerous parts of the country retained the practice, although implementation was far from uniform. Starting and ending dates varied, creating a myriad of practical problems.

With the Uniform Time Act of 1966, Congress took ownership of the issue, fixing those dates. States, Native American tribes, and US territories were all free to opt in or out, but everyone had to switch simultaneously. DST was set at six months and then 20 years later, extended to seven. 2005 saw a further extension to the current eight months, thanks to a push by the candy industry, which wanted Halloween included. An extra evening daylight hour, more trick-or-treating, hence more candy sold.

Why not just adopt DST year-round? Adopting DST over the summer has many alleged benefits, with competing studies for and against. It supposedly promotes energy savings, shopping, fewer traffic accidents, and reduction in certain crimes, as well as encourages people to spend more time in healthy, outdoor activities. DST even promotes the sale of French fries. (Or so Congress was once assured by the Idaho delegation.)

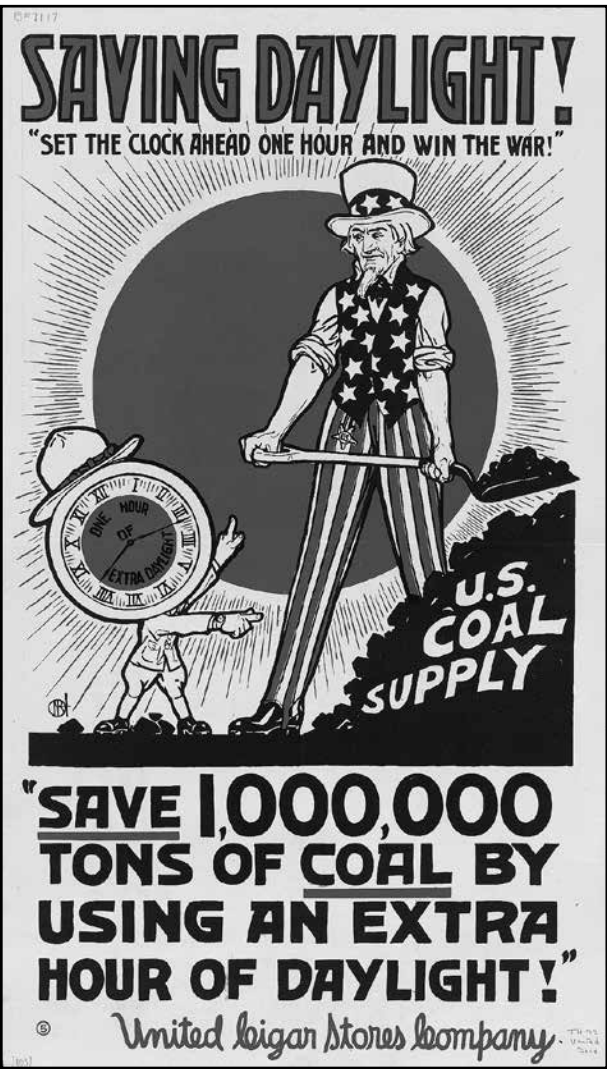
But use of DST in the winter would be another matter. In the summer, we enjoy additional sunlight. With winter daylight hours being so much shorter, however, one simply swaps added darkness early in the day for more sunlight later. For this reason, it's unclear which of these benefits, even if real, will carry over in the winter months.

In March of this year, the US Senate passed by unanimous consent the inaptly named "Sunshine Protection Act" (SPA). (Sunshine doesn't need protecting; it's our wise use of it.) The legislation makes DST permanent, and the "spring forward" in the wee hours of March 12, 2023, would be the final resetting of clocks here in California.

The SPA is billed by its proponents—being politicians—as an economic goose that will turbocharge the economy. At the very least, the Act will eliminate unloved aspects of our current use of DST. Switching back and forth between DST and standard time can

wreak havoc with air travel (as clueless fliers arrive at airports late the day of the spring adjustment) and complicates billing, record keeping, prime time TV programming, and employment of certain medical devices and computer programs, to name a few. Though the issue is not without controversy, there appear to be non-trivial health consequences as well in the form of sleep deprivation in the spring and interruption of circadian rhythms. These have been linked to increased rates of heart attacks and strokes (as much as 8-10%, according to some studies). This, in turn, has a negative effect on productivity.

So, are we



Daylight Savings Time as patriotic duty. COURTESY WIKIPEDIA

about done with this clock tinkering business? Don't bank on it. The issue has yet to be taken up by the House, where prospects are uncertain, and the SPA would need to be signed into law. Although the proposal enjoys substantial bipartisan support in the Senate, unanimous consent is a parliamentary short cut that can (and, in this case, *did*) move along legislation only when the opposition is not paying attention!

Moreover, the last time Congress made DST permanent, back in 1974 as a two-year experiment, the effort was scrapped the very next year in face of widespread caterwauling about morning commutes and sending kids to school in the dark. What reason is there to believe that this latest effort, even if successful, won't meet the same fate?

Does North Beach have any special stake in the outcome? How might things play out with restaurants, for example, so vital to the local economy?

Restaurant and bar owners are no fans of DST. Dining out is seen by many patrons as an "evening" activity, something to do after dark. Restaurants commonly see their biggest demand shortly after sunset, then trailing off gradually in the ensuing hours. But with DST, the time between sunset and bedtime shrinks by an hour, leaving less time to accommodate this evening crowd. Permanent DST will mean four more months of reduced peak business hours.

But there's another side to this coin. When people leave work, they sometimes stop to eat or grab take-out, or go to a bar, or go shopping if it's still light out. When ending work in the dark, they're more likely just to go home. With DST in the winter, one has that extra hour of sunlight late in the day. So, here's a group of consumers that restaurants, bars, and retail shops can expect to pick up, a crowd on which they now lose out. (In cities studied, including some in California, retail sales drop around 5-6% after the switch back to standard time in November.)

How to balance out these considerations, I haven't the foggiest. Especially when having to factor in a growing food delivery service, the gig economy, increasing remote work, and the use of parklets ("sheds," as New Yorkers more honestly call them), all tweaking traditional dining habits. What is clear is that the SPA, if enacted, is going to have an impact. Some classes of customers will expand while others contract.

Anyway, remember it's "fall back, spring forward," not "fall forward, spring back." Especially if you plan to fly next March 12.



Time change in US Capitol Building, 1918. COURTESY WIKIPEDIA

GIOCHIAMO A BOCCE!

By Charles Versaggi

Let's play ball! No, not America's favorite national pastime. We're talking about bocce—a strategic game with an ancient Egyptian lineage, enjoyed by the Greeks and passed to the Romans who popularized it to become among the world's most favorite games. Initially played by Italian immigrants, next to baseball, basketball, and soccer, bocce has always been a part of North Beach's sports culture. Although you don't have to be Italian to participate, along with getting exercise, improving your overall balance and stamina, young or old, playing bocce is a competitive way to spend a few hours calmly outdoors in the company of friends.

I recently caught up with an elderly group of mostly Italian-Americans passing a lazy sunny afternoon doing just that at the bocce ball courts located at the northwest corner of Joe DiMaggio Playground. This is where North Beach local "Joltin' Joe" DiMaggio, the eighth of nine children born to Sicilian immigrants, played sandlot baseball with his four brothers in the 1920s. Back in the day, we just called it "the playground," before it was named after the Yankee baseball legend and its renovation completed in 2015.

Italian Community Services Supports the Italian Community

"We were a little quieter during Covid and couldn't do a lot of our community activities and instead delivered a lot of care packages to our Italian seniors and community members," explained Vyria Paselk-Haverhals, the new Executive Director of the Italian Community Services (ICS). "But now with Covid subsiding, we're re-engaging our community, and this bocce event is an opportunity to support that community function."

Originally from Lake County, California, Paselk-Haverhals has lived on Powell and Chestnut Streets for the past 15 years, a stone's throw from where I was nurtured by Sicilian immigrant parents from 1946 through the late '50s in my beloved *Italianita* (*Little Italy*). Back then, North Beach was the vibrant center of Italian San Francisco, with some 30,000 *paesani*—fellow countrymen who emigrated from the same province or village in the Old Country. "Although there aren't as many Italians in the neighborhood, there actually are quite a few still living here," she added.

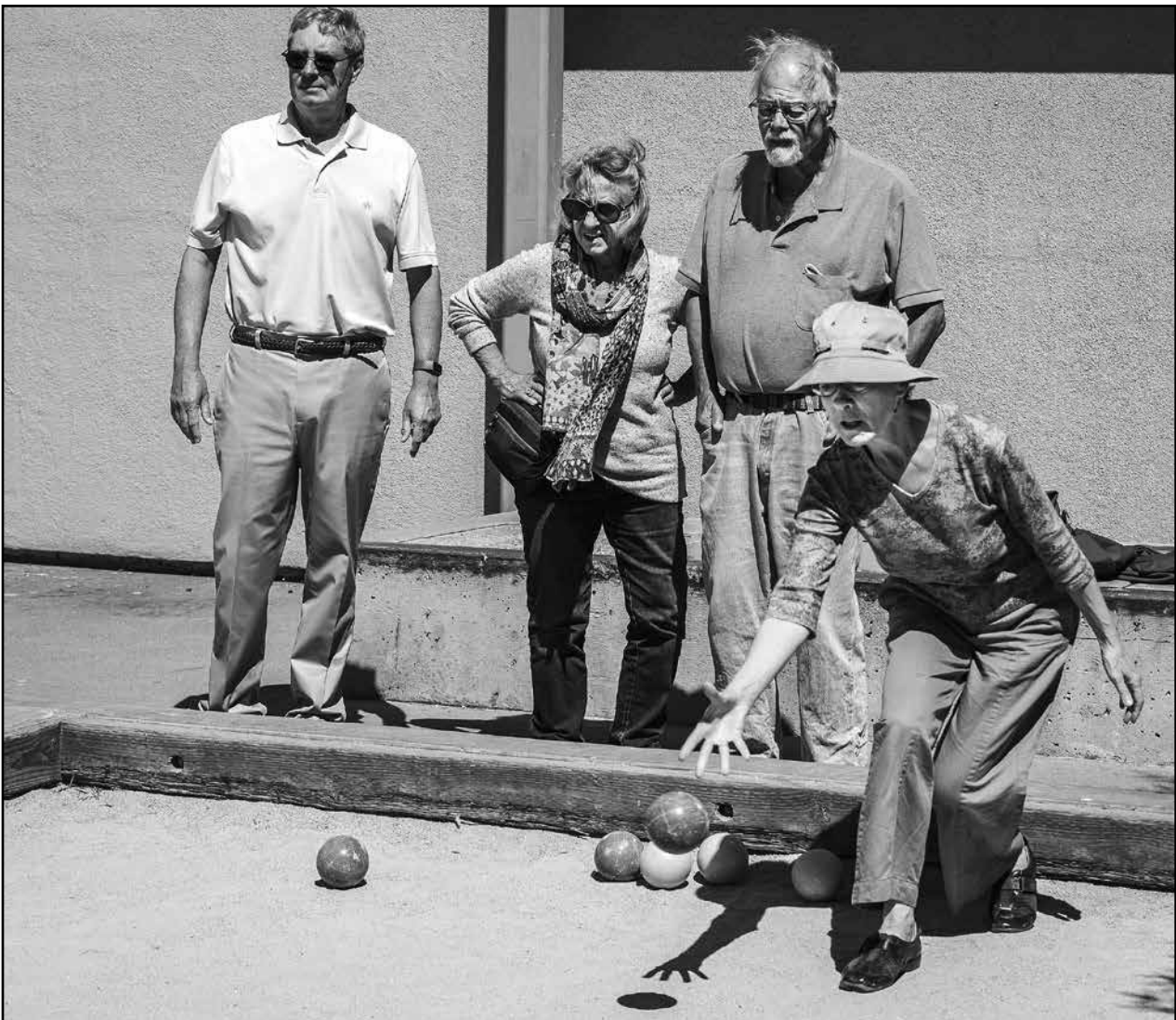
Although her surname belies her non-Italian heritage, she lived in Italy for a year. "Sono Italiana nel cuore—I'm Italian at heart," she proclaimed proudly in the manner of a true Italophile. "This job helps me practice the language," speaking fluent Italian like a native speaker.

Based at Club Fugazi on Green Street, ICS (formerly the Italian Welfare Agency) was founded in 1916 by bank mogul A. P. Giannini and other leading members of the San Francisco Italian community, providing Bay Area Italians and Italian Americans with trusted resources to help them live healthy, independent, and



David & Maria De Venezia with Jim Valenti bowling.

© CHARLES VERSAGGI



Brian McSweeney, Rita Pisciotto, Blaine Ellis watch Juana Scopel bowling.

© CHARLES VERSAGGI

productive lives. It serves about 85 clients with various support services, including rental assistance and housing referrals. Many of ICS's events, such as Wednesday luncheons at Club Fugazi, are attended by North Beach residents of Italian heritage.

Old-Time Italians Playing Bocce Ball

I also met Madison "Maddy" Barton, whose great grandparents were from Palermo, Sicily. She recently joined ICS as its community relations manager after working for the Salvation Army. She introduced me to several elderly bocce players who were already organized into teams seriously engaged in the game. In my conversations with them in between ball throws, the dialogue amongst the native and first-generation Italians was characteristically North Beach colloquial, starting initially with spoken Italian to establish your Italian bragging rights.

"What part of Italy did you or your family come from?" (Used to be if you were from the south, especially Sicily, you were looked down upon by the northern Italians. Today, despite the allusions to the Mafia and Cosa Nostra, Sicilians get a lot more respect.)

"Where did you go to grammar school, high school?" (I went to Sts. Peter and Paul School, but we always called it "Salesian School." Most of the Salesian boys went either to all-boys Sacred Heart High School or Saint Ignatius High School ("SI") and the girls to all-girls Mercy or Presentation High School. I went to Riordan High School on the other side of town after my family moved out of North Beach. Mercy girls had a reputation for being morally loose...at least that's what some of the boys hoped...or maybe it was the Presentation girls.)

"What street did you live on? I lived next door to..." (My family lived on Lombard Street, and then Chestnut, between Stockton and Powell Streets. Back in the day, everybody seemed to know everybody else.)

"Oh, then you must've known the Tringalis... the DiMares (Dominic DiMare and his wife Joanne, my next door neighbors on Lombard)...the Russos... the Cavalis...the Aliotos," and so on. Many of these families had fathers who made a living fishing from their boats docked at Fisherman's Wharf and before migrating to the United States, knew each other in Italy—many, including my family, from the town of Augusta, Sicily.

Maddy introduced me to Brian McSweeney and Juana Scopel, who were teamed against a husband-wife team, Rita Pisciotto and Blaine Ellis. Rita's father, originally from the southern Italian town of Calabria, owned

an upholstery shop across from Freddie's Sandwich Shop at the corner of Francisco and Stockton Streets, where Melina Passanisi, my younger brother Sal's godmother, worked for 35 years before passing several years ago. After many years away from the 'hood, Rita is now living in the same house on Francisco Street where she grew up.

I told Rita her last name has a similar pronunciation to the Sicilian word, *picciotto*—which means "a young man"—but the word connotes a young Mafioso. We both laughed heartily as she clearly knew the difference. "Now we know we're Italian!" she said. I later learned I went to Sts. Peter and Paul school with Rita's younger brother, Frank Pisciotto, although he was a class year ahead of me.

Juana Scopel eagerly joined our conversation. "I grew up on Greenwich and Stockton," she said matter-of-factly. But she pronounced "Greenwich" like a New Yorker from Manhattan: *gren'itch*. Practically in unison, the North Beach locals in our group immediately corrected her: "That's GREENwich!" The easiest way to test whether you were originally from North Beach is how you pronounce the name of this street rising steeply up the slopes of Telegraph Hill.

Playing Bocce, Not Baci

While professional baseball was making strides in the wake of the US Civil War, it was Giuseppe Garibaldi—the Italian general who contributed to Italian unification and the creation of the Kingdom of Italy—who popularized bocce as it is known today. *Bocce* (It.), pronounced "bo'-chay," is the plural of *boccia* ("bo'-chee'-a"), "balls" or "bowls" (in the sporting sense)—not to be confused with *baci* ("ba'-chee"), the Italian word for kisses. (Your Italian history and language lessons for the day.)

The game has seen many changes throughout the ages, evolving from a crude sport played with rounded rocks, or even coconuts, to the modern game played with composite, plastic, or metal balls. Bocce has been known under many names—'Italian lawn bowling,' 'nine pins,' 'skittles,' 'petanque' (Fr. "puh-taangk"), to name a few—and has seen many rule changes before reaching its current popularity.

Standard bocce sets contain eight colored balls—four balls each to a color, typically green and red, each weighing about two pounds—and one smaller ball, called the *jack* or *pallino* (little ball). Bocce ball can be played by two single players pitted against one another throwing four balls each, or by two teams with two, three, or four players, each playing the corresponding

number of matching colored balls.

A regulation court is natural dirt or asphalt, measuring a maximum 13 feet wide and 90 feet long, having an eight-inch raised wooden barrier around the sides. A foul line is marked beyond which players cannot step as they bowl.

The game begins with a coin toss to decide which team gets to throw out the pallino into the prescribed area of the court. The team that threw out the pallino is responsible for throwing the first bocce ball. Once the first bowl has taken place, the other side has the opportunity to bowl. From then on, the side that does *not* have the ball closest to the pallino has a chance to bowl until one side or the other has used its four balls. At that point, the other side bowls its remaining balls. Points are tallied at the end of each frame; then the teams play the next frame at the opposite end of the bocce court.

Scoring

The object of the game is for a team to get as many of its balls as possible closer to the pallino than the opposing team. The team with the closest ball to the pallino is the only team that can score points in any frame. The scoring team receives one point for each ball that is closer to the pallino than the closest ball of the other team. If your ball is closer to the pallino after both teams have taken a turn, your team scores a point.

If it's not obvious, sometimes one has to measure which team's ball is closer to the pallino. Two points if touching. Neither team scores if the bocce balls are equidistant from the pallino. Depending on the local rules, the "set point" is typically 12 points. The winner of the game is the team that reaches the set point goal first.

Strategy and Technique

There are several ways to throw a bocce ball. Most tend to throw the ball underhanded, with their palm



Jim Valenti and Rod Freebairn-Smith measuring ball distance.

© CHARLES VERSAGGI

cupping the underside of the ball and either lobbing the ball higher into the air or bowling the ball from closer to the ground. Some, however, choose to throw the ball cupping it from the top instead of from the bottom, lobbing it the same way they would have an underhand throw. It's acceptable to hit the pallino; the closest to the pallino still applies to scoring. Playing the ball off the wooden rail can make for some interesting strategy and fun shots.

Where to Play Bocce

NEXTVillage SF hosts bocce ball at the Joe DiMaggio Playground in North Beach (behind the SF Library) every Tuesday from 1:30 - 5:30 p.m. (Contact

Rod Freebairn-Smith, rf@f-sc.com). San Francisco offers many public bocce ball courts, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. These include Aquatic Park (six outdoor and covered courts); Ferry Bocce at Embarcadero Plaza across from the Ferry Building; Meadow Bocce Ball Courts in Park Merced Meadows near Lake Merced; and at the Civic Center. The Museo Italo Americano at San Francisco's Fort Mason sponsors an annual bocce tournament. Many bocce players belong to a formal bocce ball league and play at Marin Bocce in San Rafael, where annual tournaments are held.

Despite the skyrocketing popularity of pickleball, another game that doesn't require natural athleticism and is best played with a cocktail on the sidelines, I don't think bocce ball will ever go out of favor—as long as there are Italians in North Beach.

"You wouldn't have won if we'd beaten you."—Lorenzo Pietro "Yogi" Berra, power hitter and defensive catcher and Giuseppe Paolo DiMaggio's teammate with the New York Yankees—both born to Italian immigrants, who really did say everything he said.

Charles Versaggi is a native San Franciscan of Italian-Sicilian heritage. His current project is "North Beach Light," a collection of photo essays that reflect on his early years of living in North Beach when it was the City's "Italianita" and the center of Beat lifestyle, topless bars, and jazz clubs, leading to flower power and the Summer of Love. Contact: charlesversaggi@me.com.



Bocce pallino (small white ball) with light team scoring 2 points.

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7



PLANNING & ZONING REPORT

by Stan Hayes, Nancy Shanahan, and Mary Lipian,
Committee Co-Chairs, PZ@thd.org

You’ve heard about the State Density Bonus (SDB) program, we’re sure. In its finest “we-know-best” fashion, Sacramento has adopted sweeping laws that override many of San Francisco’s long-standing zoning and planning controls, allowing developers to waive them in exchange for what too often seems minimal affordable housing.

The result? Buildings looming taller than City height limits, buildings out of scale and denser than City density limits, affordable housing unaffordable, and communities with little, or often no ability to control, or even to have a say in, land use in their own neighborhoods. (See our P&Z Report in the last issue of The Semaphore and our previous article at thd.org/bonus.)

There are a growing number of these SDB projects right here in our own neighborhood and in which THD has been actively engaged. For example, on the vacant parking lot at 535 Green Street (where it would demolish most of the National Historic Register-listed Buon Gusto Building), a six-story, 34-unit SDB project is proposed that seeks to build up to 79 feet, waiving the City’s 40-foot height limit, exposure requirements, density limit, minimum rear yard size specifications, active commercial use requirements, and parking prohibitions. The Planning Department anticipates beginning an environmental impact report on this project in mid-November.

In addition, there is a six-story, 36-unit SDB project at 425 Broadway. And, there is a six-story, 56-unit, 60-foot (compared to its 40-foot height limit) SDB group housing project at 1196 Columbus Avenue (both now approved by the Planning Commission).

Now, there is a six-story, 20-unit SDB project at 1526 Powell Street (the historic Delucchi Sheet Metal Works building) being proposed that would rise up to more than 70 feet above street level (well above our neighborhood’s coveted 40-foot height limit). And, there is a 10-story, 57-unit SDB project proposed in the Northeast Waterfront Historic District at 955 Sansome Street. (It would be built as high as 120 feet above street level on Sansome and be taller than any other building in the historic district—see our P&Z Reports in previous *Semaphore* issues.)

With all this SDB activity going on, we thought you’d be interested in updates on the proposed developments at 1526 Powell and 955 Sansome.

1526 Powell (Delucchi Sheet Metal Works)

On September 29, the developers, JS Sullivan Development, LLC, and its affiliate, JS Powell Street Partners, presented their proposed plans to THD’s Planning and Zoning Committee for the historic Delucchi Sheet Metal Works building at 1526 Powell. The proposal would demolish everything but a part of the front façade, using the SDB program to construct a vertical and horizontal six-story addition reaching approximately 62 feet in height at the roofline and up to more than 70 feet at the top of rooftop structures. Even the existing historic “John J. Delucchi Sheet Metal Works” sign would be reworked with a perforated fine-mesh screen to provide light and air for a new unit to be inserted behind it.

In addition to 20 residential units—a mix of 11 one-bedroom, six two-bedroom and three three-bedroom—the plans as proposed include a 1,200-square-foot commercial space on the ground floor of the new building and an underground garage for 10 cars and 16 bicycles, leveraging a density bonus for the height

STATE DENSITY BONUS PROJECTS



John J. Delucchi Sheet Metal Works, 1526 Powell Street, San Francisco in 1944.
PHOTO BY EDGAR F. BISSANTZ. GIFT OF DAVID DAVIES AND JACK WEEDEN TO THE FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO

and density of the “addition” as envisioned. Of the 20 residential units, only three would be “low income” units, defined here as 80% of the Area Mean Income, or \$99,750 per year for a family of three.

The existing one-story building is entirely clad in galvanized and aluminum-painted metal that imitates rusticated brick. The tile rootlets, cornice, and other trim are all galvanized metal. Delucchi Sheet Metal Works, which specialized in custom architectural metalwork, occupied this building from approximately 1921 through 2016. The galvanized metal façade was an advertisement of Delucchi wares.

The Delucchi Sheet Metal Works is significant to the small-scale industrial heritage of North Beach and, as one of the last remaining buildings in San Francisco covered with decorative galvanized metal, is a special and increasingly rare building type. The other extant building of note is the Sheet Metal Workers Union Hall at 224 Guerrero Street (San Francisco Landmark #150). The former Guilfooy Cornice Works at 1234 Howard Street was demolished and replaced by a large condominium building.

According to Anne Bloomfield’s 1982 “North Beach San Francisco: An Architectural, Historical Cultural Survey,” Delucchi Sheet Metal Works was the only sheet metal operation in North Beach and the only surviving Italian name in the business. Deemed individually suitable for listing on the National Register of Historic Places by Bloomfield’s 1982 Survey, its eligibility was confirmed by re-evaluation of the building in 2001 by architectural historians Katherine Petrin and Shayne Watson.

It is important to note that THD supported a 2016 proposal to convert the building to restaurant and brewery use, while maintaining an element of production and light industry within the building—a project that would have preserved the exterior intact as well as the industrial interior. Unfortunately, the currently proposed SDB condominium project would destroy practically all the existing historic features, which make this building so important to the Italian heritage of North Beach.

955 Sansome

Since this SDB project is located in the Northeast



955 Sansome, at 120 feet above Sansome, would be incompatible with the height and scale of adjoining buildings in historic district along Sansome.
GOOGLE EARTH



Proposed State Density Bonus Plans for Delucchi Sheet Metal Works, 1526 Powell Street
(OBTAINED FROM DEVELOPER’S RENDERING)

Waterfront Historic District, it is required to be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), which must decide whether to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness that would allow the project to move forward as proposed. As an initial step in that process, the project was reviewed by the HPC’s Architectural Review Committee (ARC). The purpose of the ARC, comprised of three of the seven members of the HPC, is to provide direction, comments, and advice early in the process on projects submitted for HPC review.

In support of the neighbors and more than 400 people who signed a petition opposing the project, THD sent a letter—see www.thd.org/955—and presented comments at the ARC hearing. While planning staff asked the ARC to review certain fine-scale design details of the project, THD pointed out that, while those details might be important at some point, the primary architectural issue is the project’s incompatibility with the historic district, especially its height, mass, and scale.

THD stated that the building, rising as high as 120 feet above Sansome at 10 stories, would be multiple stories taller than any other building in the historic district, nearly three times taller than the average building in the historic district along Sansome and three times taller than the 40-foot height limit of the California Register-eligible historic neighborhood uphill in the same block.

For reasons incorporated in its letter, THD maintained that the project does not comply with US Secretary of Interior standards for historic resources, nor does it meet National Trust guidance on regulating new construction in historic districts. Moreover, the project does not meet the legal requirements for an HPC Certificate of Appropriateness, including that new construction be compatible with the character of the historic district, that efforts be made to produce compatibility, and that there be no greater deviation from compatibility.

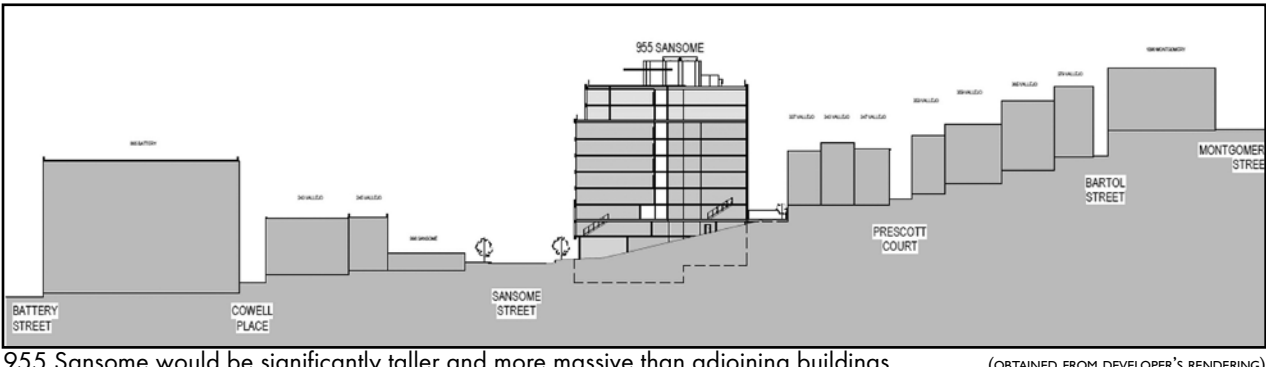
THD concluded that the project meets none of these requirements and that, in fact, it is a materially *greater* deviation from compatibility with the historic district.

At the hearing, it was the consensus of the ARC that the proposed building is too large, and members asked that the building be reduced in size. It is unclear at this time when the developer will resubmit the project or the extent to which it will be revised. The project must complete environmental technical studies for air quality, noise, and wind before a full HPC hearing is held.

To join, or to get information from, the THD Planning & Zoning Committee, email to PZ@thd.org.



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955 Sansome would be significantly taller and more massive than adjoining buildings.
(OBTAINED FROM DEVELOPER’S RENDERING)

OUR BELOVED
TERMEH YEGHIAZARIAN

APRIL 29, 1959 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

Termeh Yeghiazarian was a visual artist, art teacher, and community activist who lived in North Beach for 30 years. Joining Telegraph Hill Dwellers in 1996 and serving on its board for six years, Termeh created the Art and Culture Committee, initiated First Fridays, established Salons, and conducted extensive research into and documented the cultural history of North Beach.

A believer in community engagement, Termeh co-founded Golden Thread Productions, the first American theatre company devoted to plays from or about the Middle East. In the early 2000s, Termeh joined Burning Man, building the backbone of the organization's voluntarism culture in intent, respect, and support. She trained all the Volunteer Coordinators organization-wide, providing deep coaching and hosting roundtables to tackle challenges and define best practices as a group. She expanded Burning Man's volunteer management handbook and supervised video documentation of the Volunteer Coordinators. She named the video series, "Living Organism, Voluntarism and its Evolution" (LOVE).



In lieu of flowers, folks may donate to the Bay Area Cancer Connection, BayAreaCancer.org.

Born in Tehran, Iran, to an artistic family, Termeh immigrated to the US in 1978 and, after several moves, finally found a sense of home in San Francisco where she lived, beginning in 1991, for the rest of her life. She obtained a BA in Fine Arts from the Academy of Art and a Master of Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute.

Termeh's art engaged with the politics of cultural representation, displacement, and socio-economic equity. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. Highlights include the Anonymous Artist series at Canessa Gallery and the Homefulness series created in and with diverse communities and displayed in multiple cities.

Termeh was a tireless advocate and a passionate teacher. She taught at Academy of Art University, City College, and San Francisco Senior Center, where she inspired countless students to achieve more and become not only better artists but better humans.

Termeh touched numerous lives and will be deeply missed. Her impact will continue to be felt for years to come.



VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS / JULY – SEPTEMBER 2022

by Mary Lipian, Recording Secretary
mary.lipian@thd.org

JULY 2022

President Al Fontes discussed the tour of the Central Subway project by THD members that took place on Friday, July 8.

The Board discussed the project at 659 Union Street (Verdi Building) and expressed its support for a proposed roof-top restaurant in a partial fourth floor addition in return for some concessions by the developer. Recognizing the critical importance of the Verdi Building's historic significance and its place as a key anchor on Washington Square, the Board agreed that the proposed restoration of the exterior of the Verdi Building and return of small business to the ground floor are of utmost importance. And further, given the current condition of the building, it is critical that the project move forward as soon as possible.

AUGUST 2022 No Meeting.

SEPTEMBER 2022


Shannon Ferguson, Senior Preservation Planner, San Francisco Planning Department, and Michael Corbett, Architectural Historian, made a presentation to THD's Board on the North Beach Historic Context Statement, explaining its importance in establishing the framework for evaluating the cultural and historic significance of the buildings in our neighborhood.

The Context Statement is expected to be submitted to the City's Historic Preservation Commission for approval by the beginning of 2023 and will then be sent to the state of California's Office of Historic Preservation. Mr. Corbett, the principal author of the report, explained that North Beach is one of the most historically and architecturally distinctive and intact neighborhoods in the United States due to its rapid

rebuilding by the Italian bankers and property owners following the 1906 earthquake and fire. North Beach is also significant as the birthplace of the Beats and the LGBT community. The Historic Context Statement, which contains a detailed history of North Beach, can be found on the THD website.

President Fontes announced that long-time THD member Beatrice A. Taggi passed away on April 30, 2022, and that her will provides a bequest to THD of \$10,000.



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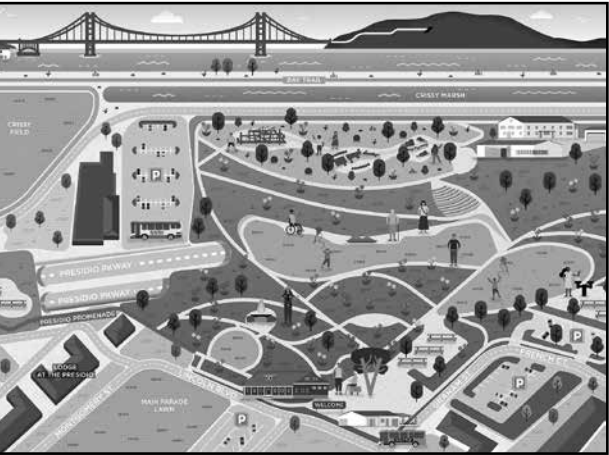
by Howard Wong, AIA, Committee Chair
howard.wong@thd.org

Post-pandemic, with changing work-at-home patterns, transit ridership is being pummeled though temporarily sustained by federal relief funds until about 2025. Muni ridership is at 55% of pre-pandemic levels of 700,000 weekday boardings. Regional BART is at 38% of 410,000 weekday boardings, and CalTrain is at 23% of 65,000 weekday boardings, both heavily farebox dependent and facing existential challenges. Even before the pandemic, most transit modal share of all trips had been declining, despite billions of dollars being spent on large transit projects—a history of poor return on investments.

With driver shortages, Muni's recovery plan has focused on reliability of core routes and underserved communities. Most pre-pandemic lines have been fully or partially restored, albeit with shortened alignments or less frequency. In the northeastern neighborhoods, the 41-Union bus (to the financial district) remains suspended, and frequency has been increased for the 1-California, 30-Stockton, and 45-Union buses. The 3-Jackson and 47-Van Ness bus lines are slated for elimination—planned before the pandemic as part of the Muni Forward Program. Muni Metro lines are gradually being restored.

MUNI Metro Line Controversy

Muni is planning required transfers for L-Taraval riders at the West Portal Station, permanently eliminating one-seat (no transfers) rides between the Sunset District and downtown. Muni's goal is to speed up travel times by decreasing the number of lines in the tunnel. However, state-of-the-art train coupling is a possible alternative. In 1980, when the Market Street tunnel opened, train coupling linked different lines before they entered the tunnel, later abandoned in the mid-1990s due to conflicts with a new automated train control system. But technology has advanced, allowing possible coupling of multiple metro lines.



Presidio Tunnel Tops Park—At the end of the 30-Stockton bus ride.
(COURTESY PRESIDIO TRUST)

Under-Appreciated Neighborhood Bus Routes

Not just for tourists, the 28-19th Avenue bus, which starts at Powell/Beach Streets, connects northeastern neighborhoods with the Golden Gate Bridge, Fort Point, Golden Gate Park, Sunset District, SF State University, and Daly City. With the opening of the Presidio Tunnel Top Park, the workhorse 30-Stockton bus is even more useful, traveling to Sports Basement, Crissy Field, Tunnel Top, Battery Bluff, Walt Disney Museum, Officers Club, and more. The Presidio Go bus shuttles visitors around the national park.

Integrated Regional Transit Becoming A Post-Pandemic Necessity

Ideally, the Bay Area's 27 transit agencies would have long been collaborating to transform the regional transit system—to implement effective projects that benefit the most people, in the shortest time frames, and at the lowest costs. Now, faced with the largest ridership and revenue declines in history, Bay Area agencies have created a Transformation Action Plan, which includes ambitious reforms to integrate systems, ease transfers, lower fares, and win back riders.

MUNI TRYING TO RECOVER RIDERSHIP, ROUTES, AND SERVICE LEVELS

Unfortunately, the reforms had a recent setback when state legislation to formalize the plan failed to reach the governor's desk.

Driverless Taxi Rides (Without Backup Drivers) Now Available

Cruise, a subsidiary of General Motors, is testing autonomous cars without backup drivers, offering limited ride-hail services to the public. Last year, Cruise tested 876,000 miles of autonomous driving in 168 vehicles in San Francisco. Zoox, an Amazon subsidiary, tested 155,000 miles in 57 vehicles—in San Francisco and the Peninsula. Waymo, a Google subsidiary, tested 2.3 million miles in 567 vehicles—mostly in San Francisco. Regulated by the State, there is no City oversight of testing, despite some accidents and software problems.



Cruise-testing autonomous taxis, without backup drivers.
© HOWARD WONG

Central Subway Soft Opening: 11/19/22

The Central Subway was scheduled to start in December 2018. Four years later, SFMTA has scheduled a limited opening on November 19, 2022—with free weekend rides between Chinatown and 4th/Brannan. With a Transportation Sales Tax measure on the November ballot, the announcement is politically practical—even as an electrical fire, water leaks, and contractor change orders push the original \$1.6 billion costs over \$1.9 billion. The 1.7-mile subway



Central Subway's Chinatown Rose Pak Station.
© HOWARD WONG


will cost more than \$1 billion/mile. Originally conceived to help Chinatown after the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, a pragmatic solution would have been a free shuttle bus in 1990, connecting Moscone Center, downtown, Chinatown, North Beach, Russian Hill, and Fisherman's Wharf. Such a loop bus would be a business booster today.

Central Subway critics suggest scrutinizing the shortened two-car platforms, forever limiting the capacity of the system; the long trek separating the Union Square and Powell Street Stations; the elimination of the T-Line into the Market Street tunnel, decreasing connectivity in the dense Market Street corridor; construction impacts on businesses; and escalation of real estate prices, development, and gentrification.

The current Central Subway Project took more than 30 years to plan and construct. Although no funds are available for the foreseeable future, a Central Subway Extension Study to Fisherman's Wharf (a \$1.4 million study) was completed—for which Telegraph Hill Dwellers, North Beach Business Association, and District 3 Democratic Party introduced planning parameters, such as robust public processes, study of new transit technologies/best practices/alternatives, neighborhood protections, business rent stabilization, construction compensation, and more. If just the local matching funds for billion-dollar projects were invested in the overall Muni system, San Francisco would have a more robust transit system today.



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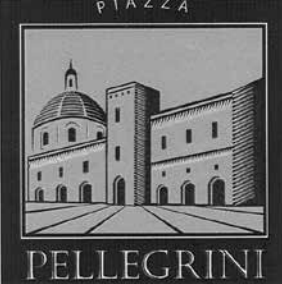
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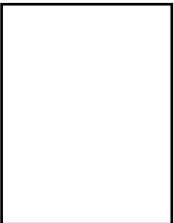
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THE SEMAPHORE

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